

Common Core Op-Ed
Governor Steven L. Beshear and Education Commissioner Terry Holliday
Sept. 25, 2013

Let's hope Kentuckians recognize the recent guest opinion regarding Common Core Academic Standards published in the Lane Report's September issue for what it is: a politically-motivated piece full of inaccurate information.

Devoid of fact and research, and based on politics, not education, the column parrots deceptive talking points routinely used in national partisan arguments without any attempt to discover what is really happening in Kentucky schools.

Rather than refute the column line by line, let's talk about Common Core from the point of view of Kentucky educators, students, taxpayers and businesses.

Since 2011, Kentucky public school educators have been teaching students using the Kentucky Core Academic Standards in English/language arts and mathematics. Known nationally as the Common Core State Standards, they define the minimum that students should know at each grade level.

Robust and relevant, the standards are aligned with both college expectations and the knowledge and skills that businesses say they need in order to compete in the global economy.

It's also important to remember that new standards were mandated in Kentucky by Senate Bill 1, the landmark legislation passed in 2009 after it became increasingly evident that graduates were not prepared to succeed in college or the workforce.

With that in mind, here are 10 important facts:

1. Common Core is working!

Since implementation of the Common Core, Kentucky has seen improved college/career-readiness and graduation rates, lower remediation costs and more successful transitions to college and career. These are tangible facts, not opinions.

2. Common Core leaves Kentucky in control of its standards.

Since Kentucky educators and the public helped develop the standards, we, as a state, helped determine what they cover – not politicians in Washington D.C.

3. Common Core empowers local school districts and teachers.

While the standards define what students are taught, teachers and local school districts still have complete discretion over how those standards are taught and what materials are used. Teachers develop the curriculum and resources that work best for their students.

4. Common Core standards are more challenging.

The new standards are more rigorous than Kentucky's previous standards and are on par with what is taught in leading countries around the world.

5. Common Core is great for students.

It promotes creative and critical thinking over rote memorization, and prepares students with the problem solving, collaboration, creativity and communication skills that the workplace demands.

6. Common Core is great for teachers.

The standards are clear, focused and easy for teachers and students to understand. In addition, common standards encourage teachers to collaborate, develop and share lessons and resources to better meet student needs.

7. Common Core is great for parents.

Because it is aligned with college- and career-expectations, students are better prepared for the demands they face after high school. College costs are reduced because there is less need for costly, remedial, non-credit-bearing courses.

8. Common Core is great for business.

It equips students, our future workforce, with the skills that the workplace demands. A better prepared workforce attracts new business to the state and allows existing businesses to hire employees with less need for extensive training.

9. Common Core is great for taxpayers.

By working with other states to develop the Common Core, Kentucky was able to develop and implement the standards at a much lower cost. Plus, students who graduate college- and career-ready are more likely to have a job and pay taxes, and less likely to be dependent on state-supported unemployment, welfare and health-care benefits or end up in prison.

10. Abandoning the Common Core will be extremely costly to Kentucky taxpayers and negatively impact educators and student outcomes.

Since Senate Bill 1 requires new standards, Kentucky could not simply return to prior standards. It would take \$35 million or more to develop, train and implement replacement standards. But the greatest cost would be to our teachers and students, who would be forced to abandon progress.

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